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AF

2 NC chefs make marks at home, nationally

BY DREW JACKSON
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When two new restaurants opened in Raleigh and Kinston about 10 years ago, food changed in North Carolina, and the state changed because of it.

We thought about the land and ourselves differently; we had higher expectations of what we ate, a greater sense of responsibility and ate better than ever before.

The News & Observer – in its 20th year of naming Tar Heels of the Year – is honoring Raleigh chef Ashley Christensen and Kinston chef Vivian Howard this year for their roles in reinventing North Carolina's food and dining culture and shining a national spotlight on the state.

"This region is home to a remarkable number of talented and committed people," N&O Executive Editor John Drescher said. "For 20 years, it's been our pleasure to recognize some of these people and to bring our readers signature profiles about our Tar Heels of the Year. Ashley Christensen and Vivian Howard have reshaped how we think about food and dining. I'm pleased to add them to an impressive list of North Carolinians who have made a difference in our state."

They've spent the past decade building restaurants and a dining community, revitalizing cities, writing cookbooks, championing causes and making plates of food that made North Carolina a better place to live. Howard's PBS series "A Chef's Life" has introduced Eastern North Carolina, its farmers and culinary traditions to millions of viewers.

The News & Observer started its Tar Heel of the Year series in 1997, promising "a deep and probing look at one leader who has had wide and lasting impact."

Previous Tar Heels have included religious leader Franklin Graham, the late historian John Hope Franklin, Nobel Prize winners Paul Modrich and Aziz Sancar and a diverse group of community influencers, thinkers, scientists and business people.

In-depth profiles and videos of Christensen and Howard will appear Dec. 14 on news observer.com, the same day as an event that honors them along with previous Tar Heels of the Year. The event at the Crabtree Marriott in North Raleigh is open to the public.

The stories, along with extensive photos, will be published in print Sunday, Dec. 17.

The two chefs and businesswomen share much in common. They're North Carolina natives

SEE CHEFS, 2A

PHOTOS BY JULI LEONARD jleonard@newsobserver.com

Brad Woodhouse, a Democrat, left, and his brother, state Republican Party Executive Director Dallas Woodhouse, get into an animated discussion over the Thanksgiving meal at their mother's Raleigh home. The brothers are known for their jousting over politics.

The face of state's GOP is partisan and proud of it

BY BRYAN ANDERSON
Correspondent

RALEIGH

Standing in the funnel cake line at the N.C. State Fair, Dallas Woodhouse places an order for his colleague working the Republican Party booth. He gets the cake and turns around.

His son has vanished.

"Cooper! Cooper! Cooper!" Woodhouse shouts.

Cooper is 9 and has severe attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

"This happens all the time," says Jackson, Cooper's older brother.

Woodhouse leaves and 10 minutes later, he returns with a smirk on his face and Cooper by his side.

"He went to the Republican booth," Woodhouse says. "He's a smart kid."

A bit more than a decade ago, Woodhouse was a custodian at the fairgrounds, with a kid on the way and uncertain job prospects. Today, he is one of the most prominent and divisive figures in North Carolina politics.

"You know what I am most thankful for?" Dallas Woodhouse, right, asks his youngest son, Cooper, 9, as they wrestle on the couch. "You!"

MORE INSIDE
A Woodhouse Thanksgiving. 11A

He's familiar for his bombastic television persona, often showcased in shouting matches with his brother, a political opposite.

Woodhouse works as executive director of the state's Republican Party. He has led a series of pro-GOP groups in North Carolina, promoting conservative beliefs with sometimes unorthodox marketing strategies.

In 2014, Woodhouse stood on the sidelines of a "Moral Monday" protest. He recruited a young woman to wear a sun costume. He wanted to convey to protesters that sunny days had arrived for the state's econ-

SEE WOODHOUSE, 10A

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